

INDIAN MILL LIFE

Operators' Conditions and the New Factory Bill

By James Haslam.

There isn't much heaven on earth in the Indian factory system. An attempt is now being made to improve it by means of a bill, which has been submitted to the Viceroy's Legislative Council. But if this proposed measure be adopted, without making any concessions to its opponents, the Indian factory system will, in all probability, still be lacking in heavenly qualities. At least it would seem so.

THE EMPIRE OF WHICH, ETC.

But let us look at what this system is and has been of recent years. And I may say that I am basing my remarks on piles of evidence which I have collected, representing all classes of British and Indian opinion. Well, up to about 1894, the hours of labor in Indian textile factories were from sunrise to sunset. They were called daylight hours. They were at the sunniest part of the year 13½ hour per day; at the shortest days they were 11 hours; they averaged throughout the year 12 hours and five minutes a day, or 72½ hours per week, to say nothing of Sunday labor in the shape of oiling and cleaning machinery, etc. Not being able to lengthen the daylight by appealing to the sun to be more generous towards them, the capitalists introduced electric lighting in the factories—thus getting at the wonderful Orb by indirect light. Whilst some mill-owners were content to work the mills what were regarded as reasonable hours, others were not. To cut short a long and lamentable story, the whole of those in the textile industry were compelled by competition to follow the suit of the more soulless ones. Hours were lengthened. Men and women and children were worked to death. In Bombay Island the actual working hours per day varied from 13 to 13½. At Ahmedabad they varied from 13½ to 14½ per day. At Agra the minimum was 13½ hours, and the maximum 15½. But in the jute weaving mills of Calcutta they broke the record of 15½ hours by going up to 16 hours per day. That is 96 hours per week, not counting the cleaning of machinery on the Sabbath morning.

THE HAPPY INDIAN CHILD

I have a few worse things than this to relate. And for fear that you should think I am exaggerating, let me say that what I have given you is taken from the report of the Indian Factory Labor Commission, issued in July of last year. And mark this—in some instances even married workers had been found laboring in mills on night shift, after having been engaged in some other mill for the long hours I have recorded. And what of the children? Here it is that some of the most inhuman details come in to fill up the dismal picture. In some cases it was found—found by the cool, calculating commissioners' mind—you—that many many children were at the grinding wheels before the legal age of nine! I have a communication from an Indian mill manager, who tells me that he has seen the youngsters at the spindles and looms at the age of eight years and at seven years of age! But let us go back to the Labor Commission appointed by the Indian government. Listen. In Calcutta, the headquarters of a special factory inspector from 30 to 40 per cent. of the children, employed as half-timers, were under the legal age of nine. They were employed in jute factories. Have you any idea how dark and dusty and unsanitary and ill-ventilated some of these jute mills are? Anyhow, it was found also that in some instances about 60 per cent. of children under the age of fourteen years were employed on full time labor. The youngsters were worked the same number of hours as the adults! To emphasize what that means, I will repeat that adults from 13 to 16 hours a day—from 78 to 96 hours per week, not including the Sunday labor. Sometimes they didn't actually work all these hours, because they couldn't do it; they fell asleep by the machinery; both children and adults frequently stole away from the iron wheels and came back when they were driven back by various circumstances. Their wages were low; their housing conditions were abominable.

UTOPIAN PROPOSALS

What all this must have meant to

**Children Cry
FOR FLETCHER'S
CASTORIA**

the life, health and happiness of the people, I must leave to the reader's calculation. Let us weigh up the new bill for a moment. Its most drastic proposal is in the clause which declares that the hours of labor in any textile factory shall not be more than 12 per day. That means 72 hours per week. In Lancashire mills the hours are 55½ per week. The bill proposes that work should not commence before 5.30 a.m., nor continue after 7 at night. This would give to the operatives one hour and a half for meals. There is a clause to the effect that there shall be one holiday of one whole day a week, which would, of course be Sunday. So that if the bill passes the Indian textile factory operative will still be blest with a week's burden of 72 hours in an Indian mill, in an Indian atmosphere. That alludes only to textile mills. In other industrial establishments he will be still left to work all the hours that the god of capital cares to dictate.

But—take note of this "but"—there is a probability that this only drastic clause in the bill will not be accepted by those who may pull the wires of the Government. I mean the clause to regulate the hours of adult textile workers to 12 per day, or 72 per week. Within the last three years there has been sufficient evidence to indicate that there is a strong body of men in India who are opposed to any restriction to the hours of the adults. It is being generally recognized, of course, that 12 hours a day for six days in the week are quite enough. But if this cannot be secured by law, millowners will be still in a position to abuse what would only amount to a voluntary understanding. This is exactly what they have done and are still doing.

SLAVES AT NINE.

Then what of children under the new measure? The bill does not propose to raise the age of half-timers. They will still be taken to the wheels at nine years of age. It is proposed, however, to regard a "child" as a person under the age of fourteen, and to restrict the hours of a "child" in textile factories to six per day, and in other factories to seven per day. The hours of women are to be fixed at 11 per day. But the terrible conditions of women and children that have hitherto blackened the history of the Indian factory system have been due to the fact that the law has been ignored. Inspectors have been aware that children, for instance, were being pitilessly utilized for the sake of profit. They have been aware of this, and they have not interfered. And in spite of this glaring negligence, the bill does not propose the appointment of a chief inspector of factories, nor would it make any very effective alterations in the present loose methods of the inspectorate (so that you see there isn't much heaven on earth for the Indian textile worker.) There is not likely to be much of it in the future, even if nothing is done to make this capitalists' bill worse than it is.

SHORTSIGHTED PROFIT-MONGERS.

Not only are the workers enslaved by the long hours I have named, but their homes are damp, dark and miserable. In 1907 the Textile Factories Labor Committee (not the Labor Commission I have already mentioned) visited the "challs" in which the operators were housed. The conditions were wretched. Even after making allowance for the very limited space which will satisfy Indian workers and their families, they said: "The houses were distinctly overcrowded, dark, damp, and ill-ventilated. Admission of fresh air seemed a practical impossibility, for the dwellings were surrounded by narrow gullies for carrying off waste water and sullage, the offensive vapour from these gullies permeating the whole of the surrounding atmosphere." In fact, the lot of the Indian factory operative this last fifteen years has been in every way deplorable. And more deplorable still is the very mean and selfish attitude now being shown by the blind opponents to suggestions of reform. They are blind, in their greed, to their own interests; for it has been shown by mill-owners in India itself that the long-drawn-out hours of labor now practised there have resulted in diminished output as regards quantity and quality of production. But, then, stiffness of neck is rarely accomplished by common sense.—The Labor Leader.

"Morrie Englan"

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AN EASY LESSON

IN SOCIALISM

By Wm. H. Leffingwell.

Proposition (a): A complete revolution in the method of producing has taken place in the last fifty years, improved machines, increased division of labor and large corporations, making it possible for the workman to produce nine times as much as they did fifty years ago.

There was a time, up to about fifty years ago, when machines were few in number, crude and comparatively inferior, and the factories were very small. Hundreds upon hundreds of small shops were in existence and hand work was the rule and not the exception as it is today. In those days the workmen got a much larger proportion of his product than he does today, but he did not produce nearly so much. Just about this time the invention of machinery received an impetus on account of the extensive use of steam as a motive power. Large factories were built up and there was an increased division of labor, which continued gradually improving until today the workman is given a simple task to perform and kept at it. At present the division of labor, together with the use of machinery, has been carried to a very high degree of perfection. For instance, there are over sixty separate and distinct tasks in the making of a pair of shoes, while formerly this work was done by one man. This division of labor, combined with the improved machinery and large factory organization, makes it possible for the workman to produce nine times as much as he did in 1850.

Proposition (b): This wonderful change has been brought about by the changing of the method of production from an individual or competitive basis to a social or co-operative basis.

As noted before, there has been a complete revolution in the manner of producing in the last half century. Fifty years ago, nearly everything was done by hand; today almost everything is produced by machinery. The present wonderful productivity could never have been possible under the old handicraft or individual system. While it now takes over sixty men to make a pair of shoes, as compared with one in the olden times, these sixty men can produce many times more shoes than an equal number of men could have done on the individual plan. We now do everything co-operatively. The large department stores are co-operative institutions, the immense factories are co-operative—in fact everything is co-operative nowadays in production. However, when it comes to distributing the wealth thus produced by the workers, the capitalist class, who compromise 15 per cent of the population, receives 83 per cent; and the working class, get 17 per cent. Not much co-operation there.

Proposition (c): But while this change has taken place in producing, the workers are only partially benefited by it, the capitalist class reaping the largest rewards in increased profits.

Think of the progress that has been made in the past half century. Now there are electric lights, electric cooking apparatus, electric heating, telephone, sanitary plumbing, houses of a grandeur such as was never known before, clothing of the finest fabrics and furniture of all kinds better made than ever before. In fact at the present time it is possible for a man to live in absolute comfort and comparative luxury. You produced these things—that is you did your share, together with your fellow workmen. What do you get? Poverty, tumble down shacks that are not fit for a dog to live in, with no sanitary plumbing, no conveniences, no telephone, your clothes are shoddy, your furniture is cheap and poorly made, and your food is adulterated to such a great extent that you are surprised if you discover an article of food that is pure. Who is it, then, that has these fine things? The capitalist class, the class that owns the factories, mills, mines, etc., etc.—the class that appropriates your product after you toil so hard. They do all the traveling, they have all the conveniences, and you get most of the discomforts.

Proposition (d): Therefore it is evident that it is the private ownership of the means of production and distribution which prevents the workman from receiving the full social value of his product.

Now, is it not plain to you that if the class you belong to, the working

class, which produces everything, lives in poverty, while the capitalist class, the class which owns the machines, the factories, the mills, mines, railroads and land, live in luxury, that the cause of your poverty must be in the ownership of the means of life? This capitalist class owns everything; but they offer you the opportunity to produce wealth for them and then they give you a miserable pittance, barely enough to allow to you to exist. They would not give you even this, only you would starve otherwise, and therefore would not be able to produce any more wealth for them.

Oh, what a chump you are! Just think of a man who will work all his life making things for other people and taking nothing in return for himself except enough barely to keep him alive. How foolish it sounds when you come to think about it in the right light!

But I will not call you down very hard. If you will promise to vote for a change of the system, I will consider that you have a little common sense left. You see, it won't do for me to call you too many hard names, because I used to be that kind of a fool myself once. I used to think the boss was very kind to give me enough to live on. Now, since I have my eyes open I realize how kind I have been to him. For many years have I given him everything I have produced. The only thing that worries me now is how long YOU will keep me from getting the full share of my product. You are the only obstacle in the way. Until YOU vote the Socialist Party ticket, too, I shall have to stand it.

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A certain rich man in a small town built himself a big house. And he reared the workers white according to his capitalist ideas. He gave them big wages and worked them none too hard. And when their day's work was done they would congregate in the town beer parlor and speak many ill things against the rich man. And the plute worshippers became vexed and said that the workmen did not know when they were well used and that the old custom of driving the workman to work under the lash should be revived. But the workmen were right when they spoke against their boss, because the rich man lived on the work of others. He drew dividends which are but unpaid labor. He was a labor-thief and his workmen knew it. Even if he did treat them white, they knew that the money with which the rich man paid them did not rightfully belong to the rich man but he had got possession of that money through labor thieving laws. No rich man can treat workmen white. For if he pays certain workmen well he but pays them with money he has stolen from other workmen.

Humanity cannot stand still. The race must go forward or backward. Shall it be forward into the brotherhood of man based on economic liberty, or backward into the slavery and robbery of barbarous ages?

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PLATFORM

Socialist Party of Canada

We, the Socialist Party of Canada, in convention assembled, affirm our allegiance to, and support of the principles and programme of the revolutionary working class.

Labor produces all wealth, and to the producers it should belong. The present economic system is based upon capitalist ownership of the means of production, consequently all the products of labor belong to the capitalist class. The capitalist is therefore master; the worker a slave.

So long as the capitalist class remains in possession of the reins of government all the powers of the State will be used to protect and defend their property rights in the means of wealth production and their control of the product of labor.

The capitalist system gives to the capitalist an ever-swelling stream of profits and to the worker an ever increasing measure of misery and degradation.

The interest of the working class lies in the direction of setting itself free from capitalist exploitation by the abolition of the wage system, under which is cloaked the robbery of the working-class at the point of production. To accomplish this necessitates the transformation of capitalist property in the means of wealth production into collective or working-class property.

The irrepressible conflict of interests between the capitalist and the worker is rapidly culminating in a struggle for possession of the power of government—the capitalist to hold, the worker to secure it by political action. This is the class struggle.

Therefore, we call upon all workers to organize under the banner of the Socialist Party of Canada with the object of conquering the public powers for the purpose of setting up and enforcing the economic programme of the working class, as follows:

1. The transformation, as rapidly as possible, of capitalist property in the means of wealth production (natural resources, factories, mills, railroads etc.) into the collective property of the working class.
2. The democratic organization and management of industry by the workers.
3. The establishment, as speedily as possible, of production for use instead of production for profit.

The Socialist Party, when in office, shall always and everywhere until the present system is abolished, make the answer to this question its guiding rule of conduct: Will this legislation advance the interests of the working class and aid the workers in their class struggle against capitalism? If it will the Socialist Party is for it; if it will not, the Socialist Party is absolutely opposed to it.

In accordance with this principle the Socialist Party pledges itself to conduct all the public affairs placed in its hands in such a manner as to promote the interests of the working class alone.